

VILNIUS INTERNATIONAL FORUM
ON HOLOCAUST-ERA LOOTED
CULTURAL ASSETS

HON. TOM LANTOS

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, October 26, 2000

Mr. LANTOS. Mr. Speaker, I want to call the attention of my colleagues to the four-day Vilnius International Forum on Holocaust-Era Looted Cultural Assets, which was held in Vilnius, Lithuania, earlier this month. Representatives of 37 countries, the Council of Europe, and 17 non-governmental organizations participated in this important conference. The United States was very ably represented by our Deputy Secretary of Treasury, Stuart E. Eizenstat, who is our Government's representative on Holocaust restitution issues.

Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the Government of Lithuania for hosting this important conference. I also want to pay particular tribute to my dear friend Emanuelis Zingeris, a former member of the Lithuanian Seimas (Parliament), who conceived and organized this outstanding Vilnius Forum, and served as the Chairman of the Forum Organizing Committee. Zingeris' parents were among the few members of Lithuania's once-flourishing Jewish community who survived the Holocaust. An estimated 95 percent of Lithuania's Jewish community were killed by Nazi murderers during World War II.

Mr. Speaker, the Vilnius Forum was the result of a resolution on "looted Jewish Cultural Property," which was prepared by Emanuelis Zingeris and adopted last year by the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe. It called for the organization of a European conference to follow up on the Washington Conference on Holocaust Era Assets and give special attention to the return of cultural property and relevant legislative reform.

In an outstanding address opening the gathering, Mr. Zingeris expressed the importance of the conference internationally and for Lithuania in particular: "As long as a society fails to perceive the need to seek justice, it may not be called a civic society. The moves taken here in Lithuania like the Vilnius International Forum, are a significant contribution to the development of our civic society. These processes, including the Forum, are our ticket back to Europe."

The purposes of the Vilnius Forum, which it admirably met, were to review progress on the implementation of the statement of principles that was adopted at the Washington Conference, to provide a forum for the discussion of the process of compiling an inventory of cultural assets looted during the Holocaust and their restitution to their rightful owners, and to establish legislative and other guidelines for the implementation of a process for the return of such Holocaust-Era assets. In particular, the Forum focused discussion on the legal, historical, archival, and museum-related problems related to the search, identification, and restitution of plundered cultural property. The declaration issued at the conclusion of the Forum called upon governments to work together to achieve these objectives.

Mr. Speaker, I am delighted that important progress was made at the Vilnius Forum. The Lithuanian Seimas (Parliament), on the eve of the opening of the conference, voted to turn

over 370 Torah scrolls to Jewish groups in a gesture consistent with the objectives of the Forum. These scrolls, which have been kept in the Lithuanian state library, will be turned over to Jewish organizations and Jewish synagogues within Lithuania.

A second important result of the conference, Mr. Speaker, was the breakthrough agreement reached by the governments of the United States and Russia on opening Russian archives to assist in the recovery of art and cultural treasures looted by the Nazis during the World War II. The agreement includes the establishment of a U.S.-based foundation which will help identify plundered cultural assets by creating a register of such cultural items. Christie's Auction House in the United States secured an initial \$500,000 contribution from my dear friends Ronald Lauder, the President of the Conference of Presidents of Major Jewish Organizations, and Edgar Bronfman, President of the World Jewish Congress, to establish this register.

Mr. Speaker, access to Russian archives has long been a crucial concern of Jewish communities and others concerned about the restitution of art and other property stolen from Holocaust victims by the Nazis. This new agreement is an important step forward with the effort to catalogue seized property in Russian museums, and it follows the adoption of legislation by the Russian Duma last May establishing the legal right of Nazi victims to claim assets removed to the Soviet Union at the end of World War II.

Mr. Speaker, I invite my colleagues to join me in expressing gratitude and appreciation to the Government of Lithuania for hosting the highly successful Vilnius Forum, to Stuart Eizenstat for his outstanding efforts in representing the position of the United States at this conference, and particularly to Emanuelis Zingeris for his enthusiastic leadership in bringing this important event together.

ALASKA LANDS EXCHANGE

HON. DON YOUNG

OF ALASKA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, October 26, 2000

Mr. YOUNG of Alaska. Mr. Speaker, I wish to provide this clarification of legislative intent to Section 761 of H.R. 1000, the FAA Reauthorization bill, P.L. 106-181, enacted earlier this year.

Section 761 provides a process for land exchanges to facilitate a railroad track realignment and straightening project through Elmendorf AFB and Fort Richardson, Alaska. Track is to be relocated further away from the runway landing clear zone, ammunition storage areas, and other military facilities. It will also provide safety and operational benefits for the combined passenger and freight rail line. The small land parcel segments that need to be exchanged on a nearly acre-for-acre basis will be between the state-owned Alaska Railroad on the one part, and the Secretary of the Interior, the Secretaries of the Army, Air Force, or such other federal agencies as may be necessary, on the other part.

Of course, it is the intent of Section 761 that matters needed to facilitate these land exchanges between the federal agencies and the state railroad, as well as the overall pur-

poses of this project, are necessarily implied therein. For example, it will obviously be necessary on a temporary basis during surveying, preliminary engineering, and construction, for one or more of these entities to be present simultaneously on each others' parcels of land, regardless of the exact dates legal title may be transferred. The railroad may, by necessary implication, locate and construct its new track facility without the need for a separate fee or use permit being processed under the usual federal land management statutes. Section 761 already authorizes the applicable Secretary to impose additional terms on the railroad as appropriate to protect the U.S. interests.

Further, while Section 761 did not directly amend The Alaska Railroad Transfer Act of 1982, under which the federally-owned railroad was sold to the state, once again, it is logically and necessarily implied that the reversionary provisions of the 1982 Act will not apply to land segments given up by the railroad to facilitate this project. Instead, the reversionary provisions will transfer and apply to the new land acquired by the railroad from the federal entities in the exchange.

Finally, Section 761 had no intent to imply any derogation of the permanent withdrawal and agreement under Section 1425 of ANILCA, P.L. 86-487, as to any of the lands being exchanged. It is the intent of Section 761 that the lands received by each grantee, either the railroad or the federal entities, shall have in its hands the same status with respect to Section 1425 of ANILCA and the agreement as did the lands granted in exchange by each such grantee. Further, it is intended that any land or interest reconveyed by the railroad to a federal agency will be automatically considered a part of the surrounding public land withdrawal without need for further administrative action respecting those lands.

ICCVAM AUTHORIZATION ACT OF
2000

SPEECH OF

HON. DENNIS J. KUCINICH

OF OHIO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, October 17, 2000

Mr. KUCINICH. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in strong support of H.R. 4281, the ICCVAM (Interagency Coordinating Committee for the Validation of Alternative Methods) Authorization Act. This commonsense piece of legislation has received overwhelming support from all interested parties, including endorsements from 72 bipartisan cosponsors, the animal rights community, a coalition of chemical and product manufacturers, and the administration.

ICCVAM was established by the director of the National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences in 1994 and is still in operation today. Thus, the bill does not create a new Federal bureaucracy. Rather, it improves upon an existing interagency committee and streamlines the regulatory process without eliminating discretion by any Federal agency. H.R. 4281 simply gives ICCVAM statutory authority to continue establishing guidelines and recommendations that promote the regulatory acceptance of scientifically valid, new, revised or alternative test methods, thereby eliminating duplicative, time-consuming and costly test